

Bible and the Headlines: Camouflage

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A decade ago, there was a Disney theme song called, “Everything Is Not What It Seems.” The song is not making a comeback, but there are stories in the headlines this week that prove timeless wisdom can even be found in the jingle to a kiddie show.

The science and technology website, SciTechDaily, on April 22 featured “Caterpillar or Hummingbird? Bizarre Baby Bird Discovery Stuns Scientists in Panama.” A group of scientists from the Smithsonian Tropical Research Center were studying the White-necked Jacobins, a species of hummingbird found in Panama. They were present when a hatching occurred. Observed one of the ornithologists, “The chick had long, fluffy down feathers on its back that made it look remarkably like a venomous caterpillar.” The scientists postulate that the bird’s caterpillar mimicry might help it survive in an environment full of predators.

Another camouflaged tropical creature is the subject of the April 24th article in ScienceNews, “This Caterpillar Wears the Body Parts of Insect Prey.” The ‘Hannibal Lecter-ish’ caterpillar is only found on the island of Oahu. The creature resides in active spider webs, “. . . while masking its scent and texture [from the host] with leftovers from the spider’s meals and skin shed by its eight-legged landlord.” When the caterpillar is ready for metamorphosis, its mortuary camouflage becomes its cocoon.

On April 25th, the PBS station, Vermont Public, published, “Snowshoe Hares Have a Camouflage Problem. These Scientists Want to Help.” The hares only have a problem in winters when Vermont is without much snow (which happens a lot lately). The white bunny stands out against the brown of the forest, and a researcher noted, “They’ve been shown to have higher rates of predation during those time frames.” Some scientists are proposing “assisted migration,” which would introduce snowshoe hares from West Virginia and Pennsylvania which do not turn white in the winter.

The Bible contains a story when the people of Israel learned that everything was not what it seemed. As the twelve tribes were conquering the land they were told to not make any treaties with the people who lived there (Ex 23:32). The Gibeonites did not want to share the fate of their neighbors so they tricked the Israelites into thinking they were from far away. The Gibeonites showed the Israelites their supplies and said, “This bread of ours was warm when we packed it and left home to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is. And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey” (Jos 9:12-13). The ruse worked and the Israelites spared the people of Gibeon.

The New Covenant is based on everything not being what it seems. The people of Nazareth, and many others in Israel, thought Jesus was just the son of a local carpenter (Matt 13:55-56). Jesus’ camouflage is described to the church in Phillipi, “Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Php 2:6-8).

Camouflage is used by creatures to preserve their life. Jesus used camouflage in order to give His life. Jesus is not camouflaged any more. The question now is, “Can you see Him?” Jesus is exactly what He seems.